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Find something really interesting and specific for your characters. The more specific you are with your characters, the more defined they become. —*Shonda Rhimes*

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CHAPTER RECAP

Characters sit at the heart of storytelling for Shonda. When you have compelling, memorable characters driving your story, your show has a greater chance of resonating with an audience.

When creating your characters, start with the basics. How old are they? What do they do? Where do they live? From there, you can begin to piece together the details that emotionally drive them. What was their childhood like? What is their family situation? If they went to therapy, what would be discovered? You might have to rethink your perspective to make sure your entire cast of characters is three-dimensional. Does your story contain characters of a different gender than you? How have you subconsciously written them differently, and can you adjust?

Your characters aren't stick figures walking around plot points on screen. Well-written characters feel human and relatable enough to make viewers forget that they aren't real.

TAKE IT FURTHER

- *Scandal* is not the first show that was inspired by a real-life person. Compare how other shows have used real-life people as the inspiration for their show. How do Piper Kerman's characteristics on the Netflix series *Orange Is the New Black* differ from the personal characteristics portrayed in her memoir, *Orange Is the New Black: My Year in a Women's Prison*?

SUBCHAPTERS

- ▶ Fill Up the Lives of Your Characters
- ▶ You Don't Need to Know Every Detail
- ▶ Rethink Your Perspective and Have Compassion
- ▶ Don't Define Characters by Their Looks
- ▶ Case Study: Creating Olivia Pope

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06 CREATING MEMORABLE CHARACTERS PT. 1

SHONDA RHIMES TEACHES WRITING FOR TELEVISION 17

ASSIGNMENT

- Flesh out your character list in your story bible and write bios for each character. Share one or two of these character bios with your classmates in [The Hub](#) to get feedback. Do your classmates feel like your characters sound like real people with compelling and original attributes?

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